



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 3, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

First Sunday of Advent

First Lesson: [Genesis 6:1-3, 5-14, 7-22](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 24](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 3:18-22](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 13:32-37](#)

Sermon Text: [1 Peter 3:18-22](#)

### **Expectations vs. Reality: Expect A New Reality**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

**Expectations vs. Reality.** It's kind of interesting how often our expectations fall short of the reality that we experience. I think about when I was growing up. Thinking about how huge I thought our house was. You could go from the entryway into the living room, the dining room, the kitchen and then the hallway. You could just keep running around and around in a circle. As a kid, that's what you did. You'd just keep running around and around and around. I thought it was great fun. I thought it was huge. Sliding down the steps. I thought the steps were so long. The yard, I played baseball and football in it and thought it was huge. It kind of dawned on me once after we had been in Minnesota for a few years and went back to visit mom and dad and went in the house that the steps aren't that long. I looked at the yard and thought, *I couldn't hit a ball that far?* You kind of recognize that when you were a kid, the reality that you see and the expectation of what it was in your eyes isn't the same thing when you go back and try to go home again.

I think some of that plays out at this time of the year, with the holidays especially. We have these expectations of family get togethers that are going to be wonderful and terrific and it will be just like when we were kids and ripping all that shiny paper off. Everything will be great. Here's the problem. You put a bunch of family members together, and here's an insight. Just like you, all your family members are sinners. You put them in a couple of rooms. Feed them. Give them something to drink. And what are they going to do? They're going to sin against each other. Surprise! Then somehow the reality doesn't meet up with the expectation we have and we can become incredibly disappointed.

Some of you, for whatever reason, I certainly hope your reality doesn't meet your expectations. I'm talking about you people that are wanting a white Christmas. Why in

the world you would want a white Christmas, I don't know, but I sure hope your reality isn't met. Who wants that stuff on sidewalks and roadways?

When reality disappoints us, it can be frustrating. It can be hard. Especially at this time of the year. So this week and next week, we're going to look at the reality that we have in our God and why his reality is actually beyond what we have every right to expect of him. The reality we have in our God is absolutely amazing and never disappoints us. So my encouragement I guess would be, if you're finding you're reality didn't meet your expectations this holiday season, change your focus to Jesus, and you're expectations will always be met.

That's what we see when we look at these words from 1 Peter. It starts out "**For Christ also suffered...**" Also suffered once for sins. The also part is referring back to what Peter had just told his readers. He said to them, "Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have, but do so with gentleness and respect." ([1 Peter 3:15.](#)) So always be ready to talk about Jesus. Always be prepared and then always seize the opportunities to talk about Jesus. But then he said, "You have to understand, when you do talk about Jesus, at times you are going to suffer for it. But that shouldn't surprise you, because Jesus also suffered." ([1 Peter 3:16-17.](#))

But his suffering is a lot different than yours. His suffering was once for all sins. "**...the righteous for the unrighteous...**" Think about that term. The righteous for the unrighteous. The unrighteous would be you and me and every other person. The righteous is Jesus.

So what should you and I expect from our God? What have you and I got coming from our God? We're unrighteous. He tells us what we should expect is an eternity in hell. We should expect nothing but a fearful dreading of God's judgment and his condemnation because we are unrighteous and he said "Be righteous." It's kind of there in that Psalm we sang this morning. Did you catch that juxtaposition? Before the Refrain and after the Refrain? I find Psalm 24 to be absolutely amazing in its understatedness of not spelling out everything for you, but if you stop and think about it, I think it becomes amazing.

We sang in there "**Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...**" Oops! My hands might be washed, but they aren't clean. My heart isn't pure. Neither is yours. I'm supposed to stand in the presence of a Holy God and he says the only way you can do it is if you have clean hands and a pure heart? Back to unrighteous. I shouldn't be able to. This should be my reality. I can't stand before God. I should expect Judgment. Then we sing the Refrain, "**Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.**"

Then what did it say next? Do you remember? "**Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.**" Think about that. You can't stand in God's presence unless you have clean hands and a pure heart, and now God says to lift up your heads to meet him? Does that fit?

When you were a kid and your hand was caught in the literal or the proverbial cookie jar, you were doing something wrong and mom found you, did you smile at her and look her in the eye as she was letting you have it? Of course not. You knew you deserved it. And you hopefully bowed your head in shame.

So God says you have to have clean hands and a pure heart to stand in his presence. I shouldn't be able to stand in his presence. My expectation should be not to be able to stand before my God, but my God tells me to lift up my eyes and look him in the face. The King of glory comes in to be our Savior. Christ suffered once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

This is our new reality, right? We stand forgiven in Christ so that we can stand in his presence, pure and holy, because of who Jesus is and what Jesus did. Sometimes we, as lifelong Christians, if you've been a lifelong Christian, you might just take that for granted. But think about that for a minute.

Let's say at work you have a project you were supposed to do. It's vital. It's important. And you blow it. You just slaughter it. It's awful. It's terrible. The boss calls you in and makes you sit in front of his desk. He starts talking to you, and he says, "Here you go. Here's a bonus check." That's not what you would expect, is it? Do you understand that's what your God did for you? You should expect judgment and instead he comes and says, "Here, here, here is Christ's perfection. Here's forgiveness. It's yours through faith in Jesus Christ." That's our new reality.

How can we be certain about it? It says because Jesus rose from the dead. He was put to death in the body. He was made alive in the Spirit, through whom he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago, at the time of Noah. No one was alive and in prison at the time of Jesus who lived during the time of Noah. So when he went and preached to those spirits in prison, he descended into hell and he made proclamation to them. He announced to them that he had died but he had risen again, to them and to Satan, and he announced his victory over Satan to them. He wasn't preaching to them in the sense so they could repent. He was announcing, proclaiming his victory.

Then that leads Peter into another tangent he goes into. Those people that disobeyed long ago, in the time of Noah, that should remind you and me of the waters of our baptism. In the flood, those eight people were saved, by being in the ark, through the water that destroyed everyone else. In our baptism, here is our new reality. Christ destroyed the sinful nature in us, drowned it through our baptism, and raised us up to live a new life to serve him. In baptism, we are clothed with Christ's righteousness. It's not removal of dirt from the body. It's the pledge of a clear conscience towards God.

So here is our reality. The unrighteous now have a clear conscience before God. That's an incredible, incredible statement. And it changes us. It changes our attitude WHEN we are focused on it. There is going to be a lot of stuff over the next 3-4 weeks that are going to disappoint you. You're going to have these great expectations of

different things. Maybe it will happen. If it does, I'm happy for you. But maybe your family get togethers are going to be just something you endure, like the dentist. I don't know.

But I know what will never disappoint you. You put your eyes on Jesus and his love for you in Christ. That will never disappoint you. You put your eyes on Jesus and I don't care if the ground is brown or if it is that ugly looking white, God still loves you. He's still with you.

Think about it. Everything that we are going through in this lifetime, everything that disappoints us or depresses us, it finds an antidote in Christ. It doesn't come immediately, but it's something that is there to lift us up when we are down. It is something that is there to sustain us when we're missing loved ones. It is something that is there that it is a new reality that only God can give, and he gave it to you. That's how much he loves you. I can't understand it, but I rejoice in it. Amen.